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Geography and film music: Musicology, gender, and the spatiality of instrumental music

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Film and music are key concerns in human geography. But rarely has film music been considered. Here, the scores of James Horner (1953–2015), one of the most successful Hollywood composers of recent decades, are used to explore future directions in the geographies of music. Through engagement with the fields of musicology and film music studies, the paper calls for greater engagement with instrumental, in addition to lyrical, music. Hitherto, the latter has encountered the overwhelming majority of attention in human geography. But instrumental music's style, form, and structure convey distinctly spatial knowledge and thought. As such, instrumental music represents a crucial addition to the topics considered by musical geographies. Through attention to such music, the conceptualisation of music in musical geographies is expanded.

KEYWORDS
film, film music studies, hollywood, instrumental music, music, musicology

1 | INTRODUCTION: THE GEOGRAPHIES OF FILM, MUSIC, AND FILM MUSIC

Film is of interest across human geography. Topics considered by this literature are catholic – from the intersection of mobilities and identity (Cresswell & Dixon, 2002), to the affective logics of state intervention (Carter & McCormack, 2006), to the spatial representation of disfigurement on-screen (Kirby, 2020a). In an array of contexts, film has been held up as an instructive mode through which to understand geographical issues, and a key site in the communication of geographical knowledge (Saunders & Strukov, 2018). Of the forms of popular culture of interest to human geographers – including cartoons (Thorogood, 2020), comic books (Holland & Dahlman, 2017), magazines (Rothenberg, 2016), television series (Glynn & Cupples, 2015) – film has been subject to perhaps the greatest analysis.

Partly in response to geographers' interest in visual media like film, music has attracted substantial, if lesser, attention. With the "cultural turn" of the 1980s–1990s, the majority of musical research looked at the production of geographical meaning in a series of popular compositions, principally through their lyrics (e.g., Gill, 1993; Halfacree & Kitchin, 1996; Kong, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997).[1] In this way, it largely, but not exclusively, employed text-based methodologies in considering particular musical examples. Among other topics, this work addressed resistance and popular music in Singapore (Kong, 1996a, 1996b), identity and Australian indigenous rock music (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2000), and popular music on the US–Mexico border (dell-Agnese, 2015). A series of monographs have collected these perspectives and others, considering a range of musical themes and productions (Bennett, 2000; Connell & Gibson, 2003; Johansson & Bell, 2009).[2]

In more recent years, accounts informed by non-representational theory (NRT), viewing this traditional approach to musical geographies as static and text-centric, have sought to stress the *performative* elements of music (e.g., Anderson, 2002; Anderson et al., 2005; Kruse, 2019; Mabon, 2002; Wood, 2012; Wood et al., 2007; Woods, 2019, 2020). These have been joined by a rich and expanding body of work in human geography that better attends to the subtleties of the acoustic, including voice (Kanngieser, 2012; Mills, 2017; Revill & Gold, 2018), radio (Pinkerton & Dodds, 2009; Weir, 2014), even sound beyond human experience (Paiva, 2018). This has sought to shift human geography away from text-based approaches to the sonic, better attending to the actual "sound" of sound, the "musicality" of music.

Despite geographers' interest in film *and* music, however, film music has largely gone unconsidered. This is a notable omission, given that, beyond its ability to accompany and accentuate what is seen on-screen, "[film] music can express what the image in itself cannot, especially characters' moods and feelings" (Buhler, 2019, p. 23). In this paper, the small amount of geographical work that has addressed film music is foregrounded (Brownrigg, 2007; Kirby, 2019). Given that the majority of composed scores are instrumental, this research has highlighted the importance of music's *non-lyrical* dimensions in the communication of geographical knowledge – including exterior aspects like style, and interior aspects like pitch, beat/rhythm/tempo, duration, dynamics, texture, timbre, tonality, and harmony. This paper takes this work a step further, offering, for the first time, a close reading of instrumental film music.

Turning attention to such music is important beyond adding another analytical topic to the geographical repertoire. While representational and non-representational approaches to music have created a wide-ranging body of literature, they have methodological and conceptual limitations. In the case of the former, lyrics have been afforded pre-eminence, despite these being just a single component of music (and arguably one best addressed by visual, rather than acoustic, methodologies). In the case of the latter, instrumental music has been addressed in greater depth, but close readings of the mechanics of such music have been generally overlooked. Where such mechanics have been considered, this has often been through narrow philosophical treatises by non-musical experts. For example, Simpson (2009) has considered timbre – the character of musical sound – but through the very particular definition of the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy ("Timbre is above all the unity of a diversity that its unity does not reabsorb" [Nancy, 2007, p. 41]). Anderson et al., in the editorial that set out the non-representational position on music, have suggested that:

> The logic of attunement to practice and performance is that we suspend our assumptions about what music and sound are and how they achieve effects. Music and sound become indeterminate, elusive, objects of research. Indeed all we can state, paraphrasing Spinoza on the composition of the body, is that *we do now know what music or sound can do*. (2005, p. 641; emphasis in original)

In both representational and non-representational geographies, the rich body of work that exists on *how* non-lyrical music communicates, principally from the field of musicology, has been omitted (cf., Jazeel, 2005; Krims, 2007; Wood, 2012). As Jazeel stated nearly 15 years ago, in a call yet to be heeded, "there has been a notable lack of geographical research that adequately engages with musicological interests in the politics of musical form and content" (2005, p. 233). This paper shows how instrumental music communicates geographical knowledge, and how better appreciating this brings a new and substantial area of popular culture under the purview of critical geography. It shows how analysis of instrumental music offers not only richer geographical accounts of music, but the promise of greater political impact for musical geographies too.

In structure, this paper first offers a detailed review of geographical and musicological work, showing how, through the example of instrumental film scores, new light can be cast on how geographical meaning is made through non-lyrical music. It introduces the late 20th century "hyperclassical" resurgence in contemporary Hollywood film scores (Kassabian, 2001, p. 89), and offers an analysis of four, largely overlooked films from the oeuvre of James Horner (1953–2015), a key exponent of this renaissance. In particular, it considers Horner's portrayal of gender and space in the scores of four films from the 1990s: in Case Study I, *Apollo 13* (1995); in Case Study II, *Legends of the Fall* (1994), *Deep Impact* (1998), and *Bicentennial Man* (1999). During this period, Horner's work attained a peak of commercial achievement (Davison, 2004), complementing celebratory perspectives on the American project prominent in popular culture immediately after the Cold War.

2 | MUSICOLOGY, ACOUSTIC GENDERING, AND FILM MUSIC

2.1 | Gender, neo-romanticism, and the classical tradition in hollywood scores

Geographical work on gender in film and music mirrors broader geographical work on these media – generally, there has been more concern with film than with music. In the sub-fields of political geography and critical geopolitics, film has been

explored as a key site in the creation of gendered norms (e.g., Dittmer & Bos, 2019; Funnell & Dodds, 2017; Glynn & Cupples, 2015; Kirby, 2015, 2019). This has built on Laura Mulvey's (1975) path-breaking work on women's subordinate position in classic Hollywood film, and the many contributions that followed (e.g., Brown, 2011; Jeffords, 1994; Kennedy, 2018; Lindner, 2017; Richardson, 2019). Geographical work on music and gender has been of lesser quantity. Generally, it has considered gender only tangentially (e.g., Connell & Gibson, 2003; Kong, 1995); where it has focused on gender, it has considered musical practice and performance, rather than music *per se* (Maalsen & McLean, 2016).

Outside of geography, however, there has been concerted attention to the representation of gender in music, including film music (Solie, 1993). This has come from an array of cognate disciplines, including musicology and the interdisciplinary nexus of film music studies (Neumeyer, 2013). This literature has generally focused on composed instrumental diegetic score: non-lyrical music that the audience can hear, but the film's characters cannot.[3] It has shown how the elements of such music are implicated in the construction of space and gender, often through the use of musical conventions that, drawing from the Romantic-era of classical music (largely contemporaneous with the 19th century), are associated with particular understandings of femininity and masculinity (Gorbman, 1987).[4] The Romantic style was a key influence on classic (or "Golden Era") Hollywood film (from the 1910s to the 1960s), and contemporary symphonic film music, including that of James Horner, has followed its example (Neumeyer, 2000). This makes traditional representations of gender and gender roles a continuing characteristic of the medium (Flinn, 1992).

In 1982, Kalinak published the first analysis of gendered stereotypes in classic Hollywood film music.[5] There, Kalinak distinguished between two female stereotypes: the "fallen woman," synonymous with the jazz style, performed by saxophones, muted horns; and the "virtuous wife," portrayed by lush, balanced melodies, drawing on the Romantic canon. Since then, a series of authors have further traced the connections between classical Hollywood film scores, Romanticism, and gender. For Flinn (1992), scores such as *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and *The Sea Hawk* (1940) link to an idealised and lost American past, which, through a series of Romantic musical tropes, is implicitly feminised (Flinn, 1992). For Laing, considering the same period, but different genres, "the representation of gender in melodrama and the woman's film is … informed in the 1940s by a combination of Romantic conceptions of emotion, music and gender" (2007, p. 7). For Franklin, "the typical cinematic 'love theme' of the 1930s or '40s … [consists of] soaring violins and sobbing horns straight out of [the Romantic oeuvre of] Tchaikovsky, tugging at our heartstrings" (2011, p. 3).

Classic Hollywood scores have sexualised female characters in certain ways, too. Most obviously, women, as objects for an assumed heterosexual male audience, have been scored synonymously with love – another borrowing from the Romantic tradition. Thus, describing the advent of the sound era in film from the 1920s, Buhler notes that "the typical doubling of the love theme with the theme for the heroine … [suggests] that the heroine existed in the film primarily to be the love object of the hero" (2019, p. 5). In turn, such scores make differing value judgements of male and female characters: "where the male character has a well-defined theme, [love themes] suggest that she [the female character] is essentially identical to [her] relationship [with him], whereas the theme for the hero establishes a musical identity for him that cannot be reduced in the same way" (Buhler et al., 2010, p. 198). Put another way: in the classic Hollywood score, the range of meanings attached to male characters exceeds that of female characters; female characters are scored in relation to male, but the opposite is less frequently true.

While there are opportunities for counter-readings of this patterning (Haworth, 2012; Laing, 2007), its basic structures have remained remarkably durable. Many contemporary film scores are predicated on the lineage of classic Hollywood film music, itself predicated on the older association with Romanticism (Kalinak, 1992). Thus, Kassabian (2001), commenting on Hollywood film scores from the 1980s, has described what she calls a "hyperclassical" resurgence. While alternative approaches to scoring – from jazz to electronic, modernism to minimalism (Cooke, 2008) – have been trialled across film's history, and continue to attract filmmakers, key elements of the Romantic style, like the character *leitmotif*, remain prominent in Hollywood scores. Examples include the *Lord of the Rings* (2001–3) trilogy, the *Harry Potter* series (2001–11), and the rebooted *Star Wars* franchise (2015–present).

By convention, the origin of this hyperclassical return in Hollywood scoring is traced to the oeuvre of John Williams (Cooke, 2008), the film composer who has attracted the most scholarly attention (e.g., Scheurer, 1997; Schneller, 2013; Lehman, 2015; Zacharopoulos, 2017), famous for scores including *Jaws* (1975), and the *Star Wars* (1977–2019) and *Indiana Jones* (1981–2008) franchises (see Audissino, 2014). Less attention has been paid to the work of James Horner (cf., Cohen, 2014; Lehman, 2012, 2013), whose work has also embraced the Romantic tradition of classical Hollywood scores (Lehman, 2018). Together, Williams and Horner have scored a substantial proportion of Hollywood blockbusters in recent decades. With Hans Zimmer, Alan Silvestri, James Newton Howard, Michael Giacchino, Danny Elfman, John Powell, Brian Tyler, and Howard Shore, Williams and Horner make up the top ten highest-grossing composers, and account for over US$175 billion worth of cinema receipts worldwide (The Numbers, 2019a). By comparison, the ten highest-grossing film directors account for just over US$60 billion of global receipts (The Numbers, 2019b).

The output of this select group of composers is a crucial component of the geographical worlds created by much of Hollywood film. And this output is frequently predicated on a style of music that, in style and form, draws on classical tenets laid down during a historical period when gender roles were starkly circumscribed. Even when this style is not employed in modern productions, the advent of film streaming services and the repetitive broadcast of a select group of "classic" Hollywood films means that audiences continue to be widely exposed to this stylistic approach. This legacy has produced a body of instrumental music that renders geographical meaning in very particular ways. As such, an analysis of the mechanics of such music offers one avenue through which instrumental music might be approached by geographers of music.

But what are these mechanics?

2.2 | Musicology, film music studies, and the spatiality of musical form

The film musicologist Emilio Audissino (2014, p. xxii) has introduced the ways in which film music communicates:

> On the narrative level, music contributes to the clarification of the narrative events, not only for the narrative logic (e.g., suggesting the thoughts of a character and thereby motivating the reasons for his actions) but also for time construction (e.g., providing the fragments of a montage sequence with some linking and temporal continuity) and space construction (e.g., hinting at the nationality of a place through the use of a representative tune or anthem). Similarly, music's contribution can reinforce the stylistic level: through the use of dark timbres, music can enhance the dark shadows of low-key lighting.

More specifically, the musicologists Frank Griffith and David Machin (2014), employing a semiotic approach, have suggested that composed scores operate across three registers: the stylistic, the kinetic, and the associational.[6] The first refers to music's discursive relations. In the case of classically inspired Hollywood film music, these include its employment of Romantic conventions – long melodic passages, intensified chromaticism, lush orchestration, timbral colour – to evoke gender and romantic affection.[7] The second refers to the embodied experience of sound, with high-tempo *staccato* rhythms – notes played sharply and detached – emulating an elevated heartbeat. The third refers to metaphorical associations outside of the embodied, which form part of everyday soundscapes. These might include the association of a sudden percussive crash with disaster, or the tinkling of high-pitched piano *arpeggios* with falling water (and so the aquatic), as in Camille Saint-Saëns' "The Aquarium" (*The Carnival of the Animals*).[8]

Put another way: we might differentiate between the exterior dimensions of musical style and the interior dimensions of musical form and structure. Here, some examples of how scores render identity/difference – a central concern of geographers, but one that has yet to be addressed through instrumental music – are useful.

To start, we might think about style. In major Hollywood films, a large proportion of composed scores have been written in the Western symphonic tradition (Neumeyer, 2000). As such, they portray the world, including non-Western peoples and places, through Western stylistic conventions (see Buhler, 2019). At a foundational level, this orientates the listener in a particular way to that which is being represented. To paraphrase Edward Said (1994) and his study of opera, Hollywood film music, as a medium, contributes to the narration of cultural difference.

Beyond these stylistic associations, the internal elements of film music possess spatial resonance, too. At a superficial level, this includes the association of music in the minor key with sadness, designed to elicit the audience's sympathy for a specific person, place, event. At a deeper level, film music employs what have been called 'musical topics'. Building on the work of Leonard Ratner (1980), the musicologist Raymond Monelle (2006) has distinguished between the recurring devices employed by a range of classical composers to connote the hunt, the military, and the pastoral. For Buhler, applying this concept to film music, topics include "musical clichés like fanfares to signal heroism, so-called hurry music for chases, and jazz to suggest an urban milieu, and they often follow the logic of racial stereotyping such as the use of "Indian" music in Westerns" (2019, p. 190). Elsewhere, Schneller has examined how particular progressions, such as those that involve the (subtonic) flattened seventh degree (♭VII–V, ♭VII–I, VI–♭VII–I), are frequently aligned to qualities like individualism and American nationhood (Schneller, 2013). Crucially, these alignments are then repeated by other composers to evoke the same qualities, creating a musical discourse.

Notions of home, progress, and return are also implicated in musical form. Agawu (2014) has discussed the formation of beginnings, middles, and ends in Romantic music. Within this, "a special place should be reserved for high points or climaxes as embodiments of an aspect of syntax and rhetoric in Romantic musical discourse … Because of its marked character, the high point may last a moment, but it may also be represented as an extended moment – a plateau or region" (Agawu, 2014, p. 61). With regard to tonality, Flinn has highlighted how this "always returns "home" to the tonal center

of the piece. It also preserves the sanctity of this home by expelling "foreign" elements such as chromaticism or by domesticating those few that are allowed to remain" (1992, p. 94). In other words, musical form itself is spatial (for further discussion, see Kirby, 2020b).

While many of the musicologists above use semiotic and structuralist approaches to music, even outside of these, music is widely conceived in musicology as an ordered communicative system that can connote, if not denote, particular meanings (e.g., Scott, 2009). Audience studies have shown, for example, that music in the three major diatonic modes (Lydian, Ionian, Mixolydian) is associated more strongly with emotional positivity than music in the other four diatonic modes (Dorian, Phrygian, Aeolian, Locrian) (Temperley & Tan, 2013). Put another way, audiences are not immune to the cues described in the preceding paragraphs (Tagg & Clarida, 2003).

Film composers are aware of this audience receptivity. John Williams has spoken of writing music to reach "across cultural bonds and beyond language into some kind of mythic, shared remember past" (Cooke, 2008, p. 462). In the case of the flattened seventh degree, its repeated associations with Americana "explain why Williams (along with [Jerry] Goldsmith, [James] Horner, and other film composers) resorts to ♭VII again and again as a musical shorthand for "America"" (Schneller, 2013, p. 53). These references, as John Williams continues, "are deliberate. They're an attempt to evoke a response in the audience [when] we want to elicit a certain kind of reaction" (Schneller, 2013, p. 71). Semiotic approaches in musicology do not contend that musical phrasing always has the same effect on audiences; they do suggest that there are patterns to its employment and reception.

As such, this paper builds on those few geographical works that have sought to engage, in detail, with non-lyrical musical elements and their production of geographical meaning (e.g., Jazeel, 2005; Lowenthal, 2006; Revill, 1995; Smith, 2000; Wood, 2012). Specifically, it is interested in those accounts that have stressed the importance of cross-disciplinary engagement with musicology (e.g., Jazeel, 2005; Wood, 2012). For Jazeel, "The analysis of music within the social sciences raises inherently geographical questions, particularly around how musical practice carves spaces of performance, expression and culture" (2005, p. 233). In this, Jazeel aligns with other work on the geographies of music (e.g., Kong, 1995; Revill, 2017; Smith, 1997; Waterman, 2006). But crucially, Jazeel (2005, p. 233) asks geographers to go further, calling for geographical work that employs musicological insights. As yet, geographers have not attempted this in a concerted fashion. In the next section, an initial analysis along these lines is presented.

3 | GENDER, SPACE, AND NATIONHOOD IN FOUR FILM SCORES BY JAMES HORNER (1953–2015)

James Horner was born in Los Angeles in 1953. His earliest film scores were for American Film Institute shorts and low-budget horror films. His "break" came with the score for the box-office success, *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* (1982). From there, Horner went on to score a series of award-winning films, including *Aliens* (1986), *Field of Dreams* (1989), *Braveheart* (1995), *Apollo 13* (1995), *Titanic* (1997), *A Beautiful Mind* (2001), *House of Sound and Fog* (2003) and *Avatar* (2009). Of these, all were nominated for Academy Awards for Best Original Score, and *Titanic* triumphant. Horner's heyday was the 1990s, when his films garnered astonishing commercial and awards success. Horner's score for *Titanic* remains the best-selling primarily orchestral work in history (Telegraph, 2017). At the time of his death in 2015, Horner had scored over 100 films.

Horner's style is lush and sentimental, with sweeping melodies balancing strings, brass, and woodwind in highly affecting, Romantic-inspired compositions; his scores are grand, epic, occasionally bombastic. Even in Horner's scores for more adventure-driven films, emphasis is frequently placed on the romantic aspect of the subject in question – for example, in *Avatar*, a science-fiction adventure, Horner scores the film's themes of nature, discovery, even conflict, through emotionally rich orchestrations that draw out the romantic grandeur of each. A pianist himself, piano solos feature frequently in Horner's work, often performing *leitmotifs* – a recurring passage used to represent a person, place, or idea, associated with the Romantic tradition, specifically Wagner (Paulus, 2000). Horner's scores are tightly composed, leaving little space for ambiguity, with clear themes for heroes and antagonists (see below). Given that the majority of Horner's scores are for Hollywood productions, they frequently refer, in some form, to the USA, its history, and its possible futures. The four scores considered here were produced within five years (1994–1999), and each engages with an aspect of gendered American mythology – either past (*Apollo 13*, *Legends of the Fall*) or (possible) future (*Bicentennial Man*, *Deep Impact*) – making them an instructive selection with which to approach instrumental film score's spatiality.[9]

An analysis of reviews on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) shows that listeners respond to Horner's scores in highly circumscribed ways.[10] Of the films discussed here, 107 of 1,722 IMDb reviews mention Horner's score, specifically, with a higher proportion discussing the film's music in general terms (IMDb, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d). Of the 107 specific

reviews, 81% are positive, employing various superlatives to describe the perceived grandeur of Horner's work (e.g., "beautiful," "soaring," "gorgeous," "exceptional," "majestic"). Many comment on how Horner's music produces a particular conception of American nationhood (e.g., "patriotic," "in the [Aaron] Copland tradition," "heroic," "timeless"). Others discuss the emotional effect of Horner's scores in the case of on-screen romances and other romanticised themes (e.g., "heart wrenching," "tear jerking," "breathtaking," "poignant," "melancholic"). Even those reviewers who dislike Horner's particular style map his music onto a similar set of meanings, describing his music as "strident" rather than grand, for example, or "gushy" rather than affecting.

The particular success of Horner's scores during the 1990s and the association of his work with particular themes of gender and American nationhood warrant further reflection. With the end of the Cold War in 1991, the dangers, but also stability, of bipartite superpower geopolitics were lost. At one extreme, political commentators predicted the "end of history," arguing that Western society would cement its superiority in the centuries ahead (Fukuyama, 1992); at the other, they argued that the world would fall into increasingly local territorial and cultural disputes (e.g., Huntington, 1996). In response to such confusion, much Hollywood film – generally siding with more optimistic predictions, as might be expected of a medium designed for popular appeal – sought to offer reassuring geopolitical certainties to audiences (Sharp, 1998). Of the 20 highest-grossing films of the 1990s, numerous productions celebrated Western (principally American) pre-eminence in science (e.g., *Jurassic Park*, 1993; *Twister*, 1996; *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*, 1997), democracy (e.g., *Forrest Gump*, 1994), and military accomplishment (e.g., *Saving Private Ryan*, 1998) – both past and present. Even films about worrisome futures emphasised the role of American ingenuity in finding solutions to potential disasters (e.g., *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, 1991; *Independence Day*, 1996; *Armageddon*, 1998; *The Matrix*, 1999).

Horner's style is well suited to this cultural period, projecting a positive image of both America's past and future, predicated on conservative American mores, including patriotism, Christian theology, heterosexual marriage, the family, and stratified gender roles. In recent years, with increasingly mainstream critiques of America and its past, and existential geopolitical challenges including climate change and the war on terror, Hollywood scoring has been supplemented by arguably more nuanced approaches (Buhler, 2019). Thus, Reyland has stated that many contemporary Hollywood film scores are marked by "affective short hands" (2015, p. 123) that refuse to engage with the grand, simplified narratives of film scores in the past, including Horner's. For Buhler, these short hands include "propulsive rhythms, musical topics abstracted to the smallest signifying particles condensed bits of lyrical intensity, loops of pads and minimalist textures" (2019, p. 281). They are employed in films like *The Social Network* (2010) and *Gone Girl* (2014), which convey ambivalence about the contemporary American way of life, including its gender and class divides.

The four scores discussed here (Horner, 1994, 1995, 1998, 1999) elide this ambiguity. In this way, they provide a useful introduction to the analysis of film music in geography, adopting a clear stylistic approach that draws substantially from a well-considered Romantic canon and addressing a distinct geopolitical period. While they no longer characterise all Hollywood film music, neo-Romanticism remains an important approach in contemporary scoring (Buhler, 2019). That they, as film scores, are part of a medium more familiar to geographers also makes them a useful point-of-entry for deeper geographical analysis of musical form and structure. At the same time, it is important to note that not all instrumental music operates (or can operate) in the style of the film score. The Wagnerian *leitmotifs* that Horner employs to present heroic characters, for example, are predicated, in part, on audiences *seeing* these characters' heroic actions at the same time. Indeed, one of the reasons that *leitmotifs* are employed so frequently in film scores is because they derive from a very particular form of classical music – opera – designed to be understood alongside visual and vocal components.

While these four scores are emblematic of Horner's neo-Romantic approach (Lehman, 2018, p. 244), and Romanticism provides the basic schemata for understanding the rendering of gender in them, Horner employs a variety of musical techniques outside of this tradition, too. These include simplistic devices like the random striking of piano keys to symbolise chaos – emblematic of the *kinetic* and *associational* qualities of film music, in Griffith and Machin's typology, rather than the *stylistic* connection to Romanticism. Instrumental music is a rich and vast terrain for geographers to explore – the analysis here is a first step.

3.1 | Case study I: *Apollo 13* (1995)

Apollo 13, directed by Ron Howard, was released in 1995 to substantial popular and critical acclaim. With a budget of just over US$50 million, it grossed US$350 million at the worldwide box office. The film dramatises the ill-fated 1970 lunar mission of the title, intended as the third lunar landing after Apollo 11 and Apollo 12. Instead, technical difficulties forced the Moon landing to be aborted, with only the ingenuity of the mission crew (John Swigert and Fred Haise, led by mission commander, Jim Lovell) and NASA ground control in Houston ensuring a safe return to Earth.

The film has three main acts: the characters' introduction and preparation for launch; the early stages of the mission and its encounter with disaster; and the tense, but ultimately triumphant effort to return the astronauts home. In popular culture, the mission, other than through *Apollo 13*, is best-known through Lovell's laconic statement after his discovery of the ship's technical issues: "Houston, we have a problem."[11]

Throughout the film, emotional weight is lent to events by the juxtaposition of the Apollo 13 team's struggles to survive in unfeeling space, with the relative safety but heightened emotion of their families on Earth – especially Lovell's wife, Marilyn, and their children, who appear repeatedly in domestic settings. The extreme danger to which the Apollo 13 crew is being exposed is made real to the audience through the emotional toll that this takes on those whom they love back home. This impetus intersects with a series of binaries in the film's narrative, reflecting the gendered divisions in American society of the period (the early 1970s) and place (middle-class suburbia, where Lovell's family and friends reside). Most obviously, the film rehearses the oft-cited domestic (female)/international (male) dualism of location and action (Enloe, 1989) – to a substantial degree, given that the film frequently cuts between Lovell's familial home (and female characters) and life beyond the Earth's exosphere (and male characters).

The score opens with a drumroll, before a solo trumpet performs the main theme ("Main Title"). Noble and reflective, the theme, through its instrumentation, is martial in aspect, resembling "Taps," the bugle call played during American flag ceremonies and military funerals (the equivalent of the British "Last Post"). Both linger on a prolonged *D* at their denouement.[12] Through this, the action set to unfold is contextualised with the USA's quest for strategic victory in the Cold War "space race" – and this quest is gendered, through the brass solo's association with the traditionally male preserve of the military (Monelle, 2006). Visually, the film depicts the living room of Jim Lovell, as on television he watches – with his family, neighbours, and colleagues – Neil Armstrong become the first man to walk on the Moon. Having panned across the room, the camera cuts to a close-up of Lovell, who looks at Marilyn, tears in his eyes.

The remainder of the first act follows the astronauts as they prepare for launch. The launch itself is accompanied by a variation of the main theme ("All Systems Go – The Launch"), as introduced by the trumpet, reiterating again the heroism of the crew and the broader national goals of their mission. The final note (A_4) of its opening seven-note refrain aligns like a stinger with a lingering shot of the American flag on Haise's spacesuit, further linking the music to masculinity and the American project.[13] The interchange of melodic lines mirrors the verse–chorus structure of hymn music, providing the passage with a spiritual, specifically Christian, resonance.

After take-off, the mission proceeds smoothly until a routine procedure triggers an electrical explosion, causing a loss of oxygen, water, and electrical power. In the score, the accident is represented by the track, "Master Alarm." The track features the urgency of brass, backed by a deep string *ostinato*. The string line builds, like the tension of the scene, before coming to an abrupt halt; builds again, before being halted. The music echoes what is shown on-screen: the crew trying to solve the problem, but failing; trying again, but failing. A single piano key (D_5) is struck repeatedly, then keys across octaves atonally.[14] Through score's associational properties, the passage emphasises that things are (literally) falling apart. A quiet drumroll begins toward the halfway point, maintaining the tension, but also providing a foundation and discipline to the score: the situation is spiralling out of control, but the well-drilled crew are making the right decisions. Eventually, the astronauts wrestle the situation under control – but a low, ominous series of cello notes, bowed *pianissimo*, convey that the control is temporary.

In the context of film music, Griffith and Machin have traced how "masculine characters … have been represented through harsher staccato notes that might be associated with military music … whereas women are represented through longer legato articulation" (2014, p. 85). In this way, musical form echoes stereotypes of the (harder, more angular) male body and the (softer, more curvilinear) female form (Jeffords, 1994). In these first scenes of *Apollo 13*, in addition to the stylistic qualities of the music, the *staccato* of the chaotic piano and building drum roll reflect the male crew's attempts to stem the unfolding crises. The musical phrasing is synonymous with action, and action with men – the male characters are linked with the active through a set of spatialised relations. Later, with the situation under temporary control, the astronauts slingshot around the dark side of the Moon as part of a new flight trajectory. With no action possible, the score becomes reflective ("Darkside of the Moon"); the trumpet returns with the main theme, performed *piano*, backed by a non-verbal, slowly ululating female chorus, its echo referencing the vastness and isolation of the crew's location. Here, a further male stereotype is rendered acoustically: with the slowing of the tempo, the duration of the capsule's orbit of the Moon (during which radio contact with Earth is lost) is emphasised, as is the ability of Apollo 13's male crew to endure stoically in the face of the unknown, supported (acoustically) by a female choir and (narratively) by female characters on Earth.

In the final scenes, Horner's rendering of the masculine/feminine binary of action and location becomes clearest. Before they attempt a perilous re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, Lovell bids his crew good luck. Marilyn, supported emotionally by family, friends, and Jim's colleagues, watches television coverage of Apollo 13's descent at home. As the crew

begin their re-entry, the main theme fades-in, with greater choral support than hitherto ("Re-Entry and Splashdown"). Through the association of choral music with the spiritual (Arnold, 2016), the score implies that the crew's fate is beyond their control. The music increases in intensity, performed *fortissimo*, as the small, vulnerable capsule streaks across the sky. A cut to mission control, and Lovell's living room and family, results in an easing of volume, and the start of a gentler phase by the woodwind section. A withdrawn trumpet solo, descending the scale and with little backing, accompanies images of Marilyn and her children. As the predicted deadline for re-establishing contact passes, Marilyn and her daughter begin to cry; the Lovells' eldest son, at military school, watches on stoically. When the capsule and its crew finally re-emerge, so too does the trumpet, re-ascending the scale before sounding the triumphant main theme again – the men have been victorious.

Throughout the closing scenes of *Apollo 13*, a series of juxtapositions is posed. Male characters inhabit professional spaces, women domestic; men, in the capsule and in the control room in Houston are active (or at least, involved in events), women are passive and pensive. This gendered dualism is reflected by the film's music. The bombast of the score for Lovell and his team is sharply counterpointed with quieter, more reflective passages accompanying Lovell's home and family, or thoughts of the same. Grand themes are reserved for shots of Lovell, his team, his ship; they are the driving (masculine) motifs of the score, to which the music accompanying (feminised) home and family refer.

3.2 | Case study II: *Legends of the Fall* (1994), *Deep Impact* (1998), *Bicentennial Man* (1999)

Three of Horner's scores feature a track entitled "The Wedding": *Legends of the Fall*, *Deep Impact*, and *Bicentennial Man*. Here, they provide a point of approach for examining the musical representation of gendered love and sexuality, specifically, and how conservative understandings of these tropes are projected into Americans' past and future in three films that celebrate various aspects of the American project.

Legends of the Fall, directed by Ed Zwick, was released in 1994. Based on a novella of the same name by Jim Harrison, it tells the story of a family – a father, William Ludlow, and his three sons – living in Montana in the early 20th century. As the film progresses, the family encounter and surmount various challenges with characteristic American individualism, including the First World War (for which all three sons volunteer), ill-fated love affairs, and the struggle to survive in an indifferent natural world.

Deep Impact, directed by Mimi Leder, was released in 1998. It dramatises the events immediately preceding an "extinction-level" asteroid impact on Earth, charting how an international coalition, led by the USA, seeks to destroy the threat. Despite the scope of the film's premise, the majority of the narrative explores how the threat impacts individual lives, including that of the teenaged astronomer who discovered the asteroid, the journalist who first reported its trajectory, and the astronauts sent to destroy it.

Bicentennial Man, directed by Chris Columbus, was released in 1999. Based on the work of Isaac Asimov, it explores the life of an android, Andrew, who over his titular 200-year lifespan discovers consciousness, love, prejudice, and ultimately his own mortality.

In *Legends of the Fall*, the marriage is of that of Tristan, William's son, and Isabel II, the daughter of William's Cree friend, One Stab. Horner's woodwind-led theme is intimate, hopeful, as the audience is introduced to the bride, who is trying on her wedding dress before the ceremony. The simple, but affecting theme builds, a variation on the film's main ("Ludlow") theme, written in a Celtic style that reflects the Ludlows' Cornish lineage, and emplaces the events firmly in an Anglo-Saxon context. It becomes clearer and more disciplined, building to *crescendo*, as the scene cuts to the beginning of the formal wedding service, set in the bucolic landscape surrounding the family's Montana ranch. Now led by strings, the theme swells again, briefly showing the couple's first night together; the two of them working companionably on the ranch, she pregnant; their baby being delivered into the arms of his father, who names him after his deceased brother, Samuel, who died fighting in the First World War. The final shot, as the music fades, is of Tristan and Isabel II, holding their child and each other. The inclusion of the Celtic-inspired "Ludlow" theme during this passage, used throughout the film to represent the family and its interests, links Tristan and Isabel II's union with not just their own but also America's future – a future predicated on Western cultural values, despite Isabel II's heritage.

In *Deep Impact*, the wedding is between Leo, the amateur astronomer who discovers the threat to Earth, and Sarah, his high-school girlfriend. Despite their genuine affection, the wedding is being staged peremptorily: Sarah and her family can share the US government protection that Leo enjoys – being rehomed in an underground facility – but only if she and Leo are married. "The Wedding" encapsulates a sequence of events over several days. It begins with a delicate, repeating piano motif, as Leo proposes to Sarah in a pastoral setting where she has escaped from home to be alone with her thoughts. The scene then cuts to a panning shot of Leo and Sarah, dressed formally, as they say their vows at the wedding. The theme

builds, taken over by clarinet, as the priest conducts the service. Woodwind enters, the theme alternates between woodwind and strings, and the two sections eventually double – a union that echoes, in timing, the marriage of the characters on-screen. Their visual and acoustic joining, within the film's narrative, links directly to the possibility of America's survival – if America is to endure, the score tells us, it will be through the generation being preserved on-screen, and the generation that, given their marriage, will now follow.

In *Bicentennial Man*, the narrative perspective is different. Andrew watches on as his former owner's daughter, Amanda, for whom he has developed a romantic affection, marries her fiancé. Strings enter the score subtly, as a wide-angle shot of the interior shows the grand church in which the marriage is being held. The romantic theme builds, *legato*, before an accented note (almost a stinger) accompanies the first kiss between the married couple. Continuing with strings, the theme stabilises, echoing (if not Mickey-Mousing) the couple's footsteps as they walk back down the aisle, heading toward their new lives together.[15] The theme trickles away, *diminuendo*, as Andrew watches the couple leave the church. The tone then shifts from the celebratory to the reflective, as the scene cuts to the aftermath of the reception, the guests having departed.

Like *Deep Impact*, Horner's orchestration of this wedding, elements of which he re-uses throughout the film, cements this ceremony as a fundamental American value. It is a ceremony that Andrew seeks to participate in himself at some point in the future, by falling in love and proving his humanity. In the film's final scene, the wedding theme returns as, on his death bed, Andrew is granted legal human status, validating his marriage to Portia, Amanda's granddaughter. The return of the wedding theme communicates that the same conception of marriage of nearly two centuries previous – Christian, heterosexual, timeless – persists into (and so guarantees) the American future.

The scores for *Legends of the Fall*, *Deep Impact*, and *Bicentennial Man* are musically straightforward, even clichéd. But they present a meaningful, highly structured interpretation of the Christian wedding ceremony, tightly composed to align with the traditional vision of marriage being presented on-screen and the assumed morality of the nation – the USA – in which the marriages take place. In each, men and women are conventionally beautiful, their relationships heterosexual, the purpose of their weddings orientated toward their (and their children's) future lives together. The timespan of the events on-screen stretches from the early 20th century (*Legends of the Fall*) to the early 23rd century (*Bicentennial Man*), and across this period Christian matrimonial practice is rendered a fundamental element of American life.

As such, the scores support a number of normative claims: that the Christian wedding ceremony is the proper culmination of romantic affection; that love is (or might be) synonymous with heterosexuality; that marriage, based on such love, represents the highest kind of personal fulfilment. These claims are aligned with stereotypical spaces: the church (the altar), the garden reception, the familial home.

In the previous section, this paper traced the bifurcation of masculine/feminine space through score. There, men and women were presented acoustically in contrasting (active and passive) roles, performing differentiated functions in the national endeavour of the Cold War space race. The temporal associations of Horner's music aligned with a patriotic, gendered construction of the USA, in which the country and its triumphs were projected into the national future, through success in the space race. This section, considering the wedding orchestrations of *Legends of the Fall*, *Deep Impact*, and *Bicentennial Man*, shows other temporal associations of Horner's music, and their connection to gendered norms. Through a Romantic-inspired acoustic representation of the Christian wedding ceremony, Horner links this ceremony with heterosexual love, and the potential for such attachment to last into the future. Like *Apollo 13*, it connects these conservative social norms to American nationhood, suggesting that they represent a core element of a timeless American project.

4 | CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted the ways that gender and space intersect in four compositions of the American film composer, James Horner. Specifically, it has considered how the score of *Apollo 13* serves to reinforce and develop the gendered binary of domestic (female)/non-domestic (male) space present in the film's visual component and how the music accompanying the weddings in *Legends of the Fall*, *Deep Impact*, and *Bicentennial Man* produces normative, temporally inflected conceptions of sexuality and marriage in the Christian tradition. Across each of these examples, the acoustic gendering presented is linked to an imagined America, projecting a particular, conservative form of American nationhood into America's past and (possible) futures. In this respect, this paper has linked Horner's scores to a broader effort at establishing geopolitical and socio-cultural order through American popular culture in the wake of the Cold War.

This is only one interpretation of these scores. But Horner's work, because it is tightly aligned with the classical Hollywood style, is well suited to unpacking traditional understandings of gender and sexuality in film scores, which these films exemplify. Such traditional understandings include clearly demarcated male and female roles; the conflation of musical themes for women and romantic love (with consequences for the range of meanings attached to the former); and the

employment of several, well-established Romantic conventions to portray both these tropes through score. The "neo-Romantic" approach to scoring that Horner's work exemplifies remains an important mode through which film is scored in Hollywood today (Lehman, 2018, p. 244), making it of key relevance to analyses of film music. Future research might look at how new traditions of scoring, while often informed by classical dictates, employ their own conventions in the representation of gender and space, and the connection of these conventions to tropes of enduring interest to geographers, such as nationhood.

Through these case studies, and beyond its empirical claims, this paper has sought to show how greater attentiveness to the style and form of instrumental music – including tempo, dynamics, instrumentation, melody – opens up future avenues of inquiry in musical geographies. These questions are more than academic; they bear on the ability of critical geographies to have societal and political effect, a recurring concern of the discipline (Pollard et al., 2000; Darby, 2017; Ó Tuathail, 2018).

Geographical accounts of music to date have drawn attention to the sometimes limited portrayals of gender, ethnicity, and nationality in popular music, as exemplified by their lyrics. As a series of accounts of instrumental music attest, including this one, the instrumental component of music frames groups in certain ways, too. Buhler (2019), for example, has considered inequities in the representation of Americans and Native Americans in the film music of Westerns; Cooke (2008) has considered the acoustic portrayal of indigenous and other peoples in Hollywood film scores. Like these accounts, this paper has focused on film music, but similar analysis might be conducted of scores in the expanding area of streamed television series or of instrumental music in other contexts, from the concert hall, to television advertisements, to contemporary "classical" music. Through such engagement, truly musical geographies might be created.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

No new data were created for this paper.

ENDNOTES

[1] For more recent examples of geographies of popular music, see Bennett (2000), Connell and Gibson (2003), Johansson and Bell (2009) and Street (2013).

[2] A substantial body of geographical work on music began prior to this, principally from regionalist perspectives (e.g., Nash, 1968; Carney, 1980; Hudson, 2006). In more recent years, similar perspectives have appeared in economic geographies of music (e.g., Florida et al., 2010). These perspectives are omitted here as they are not principally concerned with the conceptualisation of music, per se.

[3] The diegetic/non-diegetic binary, while appropriate for the purposes of this paper, has been refined elsewhere (e.g., Neumeyer, 2000).

[4] When capitalised, "Romantic" in this paper refers to the cultural movement; when uncapitalised, it refers to the colloquial definition of the term, i.e., of, or pertaining, to love.

[5] "Classic Hollywood film music" in this paper refers to film music during the period of "classic Hollywood" (1910s–1960s), rather than 'classical music' for films.

[6] More complex typologies of film music have been proposed elsewhere (e.g., Kalinak, 1992; Copland, 2010).

[7] Romantic music incorporates a multiplicity of sub-movements and styles (Plantinga, 1984). In analysis of film music, "Romantic music" is generally employed as shorthand for musical features that achieved prominence during the Romantic period.

[8] For further reflection on these registers, see Kirby (2019).

[9] For selections from these four scores, see Norey (2016). Where specific musical passages are discussed, the official track title from the published soundtrack is provided.

[10] IMDb has been used as a method of better understanding audience reception of popular culture in a series of geographical analyses, e.g., Dodds (2006), Ridanpää (2014). Research with the database was conducted on 1 July 2020.

[11] The popular version of this quotation is technically erroneous. Lovell actually said: "Houston, we've had a problem."

[12] The comparison is between the final note of the second phrase in Horner's "Main Title" for *Apollo 13* (Horner, 1995), and the final note of the "Last Post" as performed by the Central Band of the Royal British Legion (2007).

[13] American Standard Pitch Notation (ASPN). A "stinger" is a note or chord in the film's score, usually played sharply, which emphasises an event on-screen.

[14] ASPN.

[15] "Mickey-Mousing" refers to film music that syncs, usually rhythmically, with the action on-screen.

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